



Adoption Language

The words we choose say a lot about how we really think. Using positive adoption language means choosing words that show respect for expectant parents, birth parents, adoptive parents, and adoptees. When we use positive adoption language, we say that adoption is a valid way to form a family, just as birth is. One is not better than the other.

TERMS TO AVOID		TERMS TO USE	
Prior to Placement			
<p>Birth mother/father/parent/child/family</p> <p>Biological mother/father/parent/child/family</p>		<p>Expectant mother/father/parents, Pregnant woman</p> <p><i>These words are most appropriate to use <u>before</u> placement, when parents are considering adoption but <u>have not yet made an adoption plan</u>.</i></p>	
After Placement			
<p>Real parent/mother/father/family, Real family</p> <p>Natural mother/father/parent/child</p> <p><i>When used to describe the biological family, these terms suggest that the adoptive family relationships are artificial and temporary.</i></p>		<p>Birth mother/father/parent/child/family</p> <p>Biological mother/father/parent/child/family</p> <p><i>These words describe the people who conceived and/or gave birth to a child and made an adoption plan, as well as their families.</i></p>	
Chose Adoption			
<p>Gave up or Put up for adoption</p> <p>Gave away, Abandoned, Surrendered, Released</p> <p><i>These pejorative terms only serve to give adoption a negative connotation. It is important to use more positive words to describe adoption since they also affect how a child see themselves and their history.</i></p>		<p>Make an adoption plan, Choose adoption</p> <p>Place a child, Arrange an adoption</p> <p><i>These terms acknowledge the biological parents were responsible for and active in making this decision.</i></p>	
Didn't Choose Adoption			
<p>Keep her child</p> <p><i>This suggests that the child is a possession and ignores the responsibilities of parenting.</i></p>		<p>Parent her child</p> <p><i>This phrase is used to express when a biological parent decides not to choose adoption.</i></p>	

Examples of Positive Adoption Language Usage on Other Side

Examples of Correct Usage of Positive Adoption Language

INCORRECT USAGE	CORRECT USAGE
<p>She is giving away her baby. She put up her baby for adoption.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ She is making an adoption plan for her child. ✓ She placed her baby for adoption.
<p>Does she see her real parents? Does he know who his natural father is?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Does she see her biological parents? ✓ Does he know who his birth father is?
<p>They aren't her real parents. He is sitting with his adoptive parents. This is my grandson and my adopted granddaughter.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ They are her adoptive parents. <i>(keep in mind it is not necessary to say "adoptive" in the conversation unless it's specially about adoption.)</i> ✓ He is sitting with his parents. ✓ These are my grandchildren.
<p>Is she your real child? Is he yours?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Is she your biological child? ✓ Is he your son by birth?
<p>She decided to keep her baby.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ She decided to parent her baby.
<p>We have a birthmother looking to learn about adoption. The family is matched with a birthmother who is due next month.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ We have a pregnant woman who is looking to learn about adoption. ✓ The family is matched with an expectant mother who is due next month.
<p>The family has contact with their child's real mother.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The family has contact with their child's birthmother.

